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SOME WAR LETTERS.

I.

THE authentic history of the Rebellion will at last be made up from the writings of its leaders on both sides. It is fortunate for history that, in the North at least, the great commanders could not only make events, but *tell* of them. No future writer on the war will care to go much back of the narratives of Generals Grant and Sherman. They will be accepted as true, and history will use them as its only basis—them and the sketches, fragments, and letters written by the same hands, or by the hands of other leaders with them.

Their letters are as reliable, and often more interesting, than their books. The time will never come when the world will not like to read the letters, especially the private ones, of men who have been its leaders.

The letters following here are not all private. Some are semi-official, some quite so, and all of interest, as being written by men whose every act helped to make history.

No excuse is made for their publication. It is done with permission, and the public has an interest in them.

II.

“Time will decide,” writes General Grant to Sherman, speaking of the Johnston surrender. Time has decided, and many events proven Sherman’s action to have been loyal and far-seeing. Grant made a treaty with Lee, and *compelled* the Secretary of War to observe its provisions, by which no man of all Lee’s army could be arrested or tried for crimes committed while a rebel. Sherman’s terms to Johnston never could have been stretched so far as this. The two Union commanders had simply adopted different means to reach the same end. Time has approved them both.

“HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE U. S.,
“WASHINGTON, D. C., May 6, 1865.”}

“DEAR GENERAL: Your letters to Rawlins and myself, written but the day after my departure from Raleigh, have just reached me. I answered immediately, but concluded not to mail to Petersburg, thinking it doubtful whether, now that it is so late, it would reach you before starting back.

“I will not furnish copies of your letters to the Secretary of War, and ask the publication of them, until I see you.

“I do not know how to answer your dispatch asking if you should submit to Halleck’s insult, contained in a dispatch published in the New York ‘Herald’ of the 28th. I never saw that dispatch, except as published in the paper. I question whether it was not an answer, in Halleck’s style, to directions from the Secretary of War, giving him instructions to do as he did. I do not know this to be the case, although I have spoken to Mr. Stanton on the subject.

“Your correspondence with Johnston has not yet been published. I have been absent from the city four or five days, and returning to-day and finding this to be so, I requested its publication. It is promised for to-morrow.

“Although I did not agree with you in the advisability of adopting your agreement with Johnston, of April 8th, yet it made no change in my estimate of the services you have rendered, or of the services you can still render, and will, on all proper occasions. I know very well it is a difference of opinion, which *time alone will decide* who was right.

“Yours truly,
“U. S. GRANT.

“Maj.-Gen. W. T. SHERMAN,
“Comd’g Mil. Div. of the Miss.

III.

Here is a most interesting letter from General Halleck, on the ingratitude of man, the failure of the “draft,” and Northern copperheads.

“Private.

“HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
“WASHINGTON, October 1, 1863.

“MAJOR-GENERAL SHERMAN, Vicksburg:

“MY DEAR GENERAL: I have received and read with interest yours of Sept. 17. I fully concur with you that this rebellion must be put down by military force; it cannot be by compromise and offers of peace, as proposed by Northern copperheads. The conquered territory must also be governed by military authority, until the time arrives for reconstruction. I have always opposed the organization of a civico-military government under civilians. It merely embarrasses the military authorities, without effecting any good. Nevertheless, if the people of any section will organize locally against the Confederacy, and in favor of the Union, it would give us great assistance. Gen’l Banks thinks that this can be done in Louisiana—perhaps he is too sanguine.

"In asking the views of yourself, Gen. Grant and others who have had full and personal experience with these people, I hoped to be able to give the President correct opinions whenever he should ask them. The advice of *politicians* generally, on this question, I regard as utterly worthless—mere utopian theories.

"Your letter in regard to Gen. Buell hits the nail on the head. I have never had other than friendly feelings toward Buell, and saved him several times when the Government had determined on his removal. Instead of any gratitude for this, he and his friends have not ceased to abuse me, and to claim for him credit he does not deserve. He never once suggested the operations on Forts Henry and Donaldson, and up the Tennessee River, but strenuously opposed the plan, and I could get no assistance from him till I appealed to the President.

"The same with McClellan. I did everything in my power to prevent his removal after I arrived here. This he *knew* perfectly well. Instead of any gratitude for this, he and his friends, then and ever since, have done all in their power to injure me. I have made no reply to their misstatements and abuse, nor do I intend to, so long as the war lasts, or I am in command. If I do not survive the war, sufficient materials for a correct understanding of my acts are on record, and will be found by the future historian who seeks the *truth*. We all have enough to occupy us in the present without discussing the past or seeking for premature fame. Those who indulge most in personal discussions will find it the worse for them in the end. *Duty, Duty, Duty,* is the only proper motto now for military officers.

"I am sorry to say that many of the generals commanding armies exhibit a very bad spirit. They seek rather to embarrass the Government, and make reputations for themselves, than to put down the rebellion. General Grant and a few others are most honorable exceptions.

"Your ranks cannot be filled by the present draft. It is almost a failure, as nearly everybody is exempt. It takes more soldiers to enforce it than we get by it. A more complicated, defective, and impracticable law could scarcely have been framed. Moreover, the copperheads of the North have done everything in their power to render it inoperative.

"Yours truly,

"H. W. HALLECK."

IV.

How well Grant could keep his military plans a secret may be gathered from the way he managed affairs preparatory to the successful attack on Fort Fisher.

"HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
"CITY POINT, VA., December 30, 1864.

"DEAR ADMIRAL: Please hold where you are for a few days, and I will endeavor to be back again with an increased force, and without the former commander.

"It is desirable the enemy should be lulled into all the security possible, in hopes he will send back here, or against Sherman, the re-enforcements sent to

defend Wilmington. At the same time it will be necessary to observe that the enemy does not intrench further, and if he attempts it to prevent it. I will suggest whether it may not be made to appear that the ordinary blockading squadron is doing this. You, however, understand this matter much better than I do.

"I cannot say what day our troops will be down. Your dispatch to the Secretary of the Navy, which informed me that you were still off Wilmington, and still thought the capture of that place practicable, was only received to-day. I took immediate steps to have transports collected, and am assured they will be ready with the coal and water on board by noon of the 2d of January. There will be no delay in embarking and sending off the troops. There is not a soul here, except my Chief of Staff and Asst. Adjutant-Genl. and myself, know of this intended renewal of our efforts against Wilmington. In Washington but two persons know of it, and I am assured more will not. The commander of the expedition will probably be Maj.-Gen. Terry. He will not know of it until he gets out to sea. He will go with sealed orders. It will not be necessary for me to let troops or commander know even that they are going, and place, until the steamers intended to carry them reach Fort Monroe, as I will have all rations and other stores loaded beforehand. The same troops that were with the first expedition, reinforced by a brigade, will be sent now. If they effect a lodgment they can at least fortify and maintain themselves until reinforcements can be sent.

"Please answer by bearer, and designate where you will have the fleet congregate.

"I am, Admiral, very truly your friend,

"U. S. GRANT, *Lieut.-Genl.*

"ADMIRAL DAVID D. PORTER,

"Com'dg North Atlantic B. Squadron."

V.

The following, from Admiral Porter, not only shows the patriotism of one of the naval heroes, but the prophet's eye as to the coming battle-storm in Georgia, and its results. The truth was, harder fighting, or more of it, than the 120 days' battle from Chattanooga to Atlanta, never occurred on the American continent.

"U. S. MISSISSIPPI SQUADRON,
 "Flagship 'Black Hawk,'
 "CAIRO, October 19, 1863."}

"DEAR GENERAL: I rec'd your letter of the 14th from Corinth to-day. I have kept the run of you since you left Vicksburg, and tracked you along in imagination since you left Memphis. I should have gone down to that place to see you, but at that moment Capt. Pennock was away, and I could not leave, there being so much to do.

"The Gov't offered me a leave on the ground 'that there being nothing to do, and the work all done,' I could run on to Washington, D. C. I heard something hinted about my going to Charleston, but, as I did not want to leave

my pet Mississippi in the doldrums, and having no anxiety to split on the rock where Dupont and Dahlgren have bumped their heads, I thought best to stay where I was and straighten out the squadron, and I have it so fixed that you can travel from one end of the Mississippi to the other without getting more than an occasional shot now and then.

"I was in hopes to have given you a pleasant surprise by having the gun-boats at East Port or Florence by the time you arrived there, but it would not rain, and of course the Ohio would not rise, but all my attention will be directed towards that point from this time forth. The great battles are to be fought between Chattanooga and Atlanta, and I am sure, now that you and Genl. Grant have gone there together, that the result will be in our favor. I am sure you will agree with me that it was a wise move in sending Grant to take command. I saw him on his way up, and he looked but little the worse for his fall. He was on crutches, but still fit for the field. Now that communication is open, you shall hear from me often, and if I possibly can do so, I will run up and see you; but the work here is terrible. I am almost worn out with writing.

"And now, my dear general, allow me to offer my warmest sympathy for the bereavement you have met with in the loss of your little boy. I know how deeply you must feel, for I have gone through that severe trial myself, and lost, within six months of each other, two lovely girls of sixteen. Still these griefs should not let us falter in the duty we have before us, and I have offered two of my boys on the altar of our country, praying to God they may come off unharmed. I have witnessed so many scenes of misery and wretchedness in this war that I cease to think of my own disappointments. I have six still with whom to divide my affection. I hope you have more with which to divide yours. Even in the loss of my children my philosophy does not forsake me. I argue that it is all for the best, and ordained by a Power that never errs.

"There is little news from the North. Meade is backing and filling with that big army of his; Lee seems to be making his last desperate effort to get into Washington. Meade has a heavier load than he can carry, but if he acts on the defensive, and does nothing foolish, will hold his own until after the Battle of Atlanta, which will correspond somewhat with the Battle of Armageddon foretold in the Scriptures. If we can ever get the rebels south of that range of mountains which separates North Carolina from Tennessee, and stand where a man can touch the boundaries of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, with the richest market behind us in the country, the Rebellion will go up like old Malory's Ram Fleet; but I fear not till then. All this is within the range of probability, and I expect to see it done, though I have had no hopes heretofore.

"I shall be delighted when the army and gunboats are working together again, it does not look natural not to be doing so.

"And now, dear general, I wish you the greatest success, and I am sure that a new era will commence from this time forth.

"Very truly and sincerely yours,

"DAVID D. PORTER.

"Major-General W. T. SHERMAN, Commanding 15th Army Corps, on the road to Florence, Alabama."

VI.

The Battle of Chattanooga won, Sherman's forces, though worn out with four hundred miles of marching, and the fatigue of a two-days' hard battle, hurried off to relieve Burnside, cooped up in Knoxville.

Here is a thankful little note, written in pencil, on the fly-leaf of a book, and sent out of the beleaguered town through a scout. It is two o'clock in the morning. The note is faded now, but it is one of the relics of the war.

[In pencil.]

“HEADQUARTERS, KNOXVILLE,
“December 6, 2 A.M. {

“MY DEAR GENERAL: Gen'l Wilson has arrived and Captain Audenried is starting. I sincerely thank you for your prompt movement to our assistance. But for your approach we would still have been besieged, and no doubt finally captured. I have explained to the captain my views, and hope to see you as early to-morrow as possible.

“Sincerely your friend,
“A. E. BURNSIDE.”

VII.

This picture, by General Bragg, of affairs in Louisiana, just as the war was about to break out, is not a flattering one. Bragg was a rich sugar-planter then, and, among other offices, he held that of a Commissioner of the Military Seminary where Sherman was then the head.

Sherman's part in this seminary came to an end with the first move at secession. The war came, and with it no opportunity for bettering society in the South; whether the twenty years since the war have revolutionized the young man in Louisiana, Southerners will consider.

“BATON ROUGE, 18th February, 1860.

“MY DEAR SHERMAN: Your two favors are received, the last this morning, with its enclosure. I find a general feeling in favor of the seminary, and most of its friends, as far as my acquaintance extends, are decidedly in favor of military organization. Still there is great cause to fear a failure of every efficient measure for its organization. In a conversation with the Doctor (Smith), a few days since, I regretted to observe what I took to be a lurking satisfaction at the trouble you had in enforcing what he called rigid *military* discipline at the academy. I most emphatically expressed my hope that you would carry the thing out in its fullest extent—and I am glad to find I was not mistaken in you—and show the boys at the start that you were their commander and intended to be so. Unless this is done in the outset, we had as well give up the

experiment, for it must share the fate of all previous efforts in the State. The more you see of our society, especially our young men, the more you will be impressed with the importance of a change in our system of education, if we expect the next generation to be anything more than a mere aggregation of loafers, charged with the duty of squandering their fathers' legacies and disgracing their names. I hoped, and still hope, your seminary may be the entering college for a reformation, but should it fail, under the auspices now before us, I shall despair of the honors of office. Of all the loose, disorganized, maladministered state of affairs I have ever seen, the public affairs of this State are the worst. Nobody is responsible. Every disbursing officer keeps his own accounts, draws his own warrants on the treasury, and, if he can only get a dishonest man to consent to sign a voucher and a warrant, they draw the money and there is the end of it. No one ever settles an account with the State.

"Truly yours,

"BRAXTON BRAGG."

VIII.

"BATON ROUGE, 27th January, 1861.

"**MY DEAR SHERMAN:** It is with the deepest regret that the enclosed papers are forwarded to you. I am so occupied with other matters that I do not know what the Board of Supervisors have done, or will do, about your successor. Doctor Smith has made arrangements, I think, to settle your salary as ordnance officer.

"The ordinance of secession passed the convention yesterday by a very large vote, and a convention of Southern States will immediately meet to organize a new Confederacy. It will be in operation, a *de facto* government, before March 4th. We hope this course will lead to a *peaceable* solution of the matters. A separation is inevitable. Nothing can *prevent* it now. Why should there be any strife over it?

"Still, it is not for individuals to control these matters. We can only strive and hope.

"Wherever you go, my fervent prayers attend you for success and happiness.

"Sincerely your friend,

"BRAXTON BRAGG."

The inevitable separation, and the *peaceful solution*, looked for by General Bragg so close to the clash of arms, never came, and a few weeks from then saw the rich sugar-planter leading battalions into the strife he deplored. Bragg lost all he had by the war, and years afterward gladly accepted help at the hands of his old-time friend, who, in the meantime, had destroyed his battalions at the storming of Missionary Ridge.

The next letter is from Secretary Chase, and refers to the great financial burden of the war.

S. H. M. BYERS.

(To be continued.)